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House of Representatives

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Ranking Member Cori Bush

Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs

Hearing on “Digging Deeper: Ensuring Safety and Security in the Critical Mineral Supply Chain”

November 30, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. **St. Louis and I are here today because we need to safely develop the materials we need for reliable, renewable energy. We’re here because the best path to achieving that is by enacting a Green New Deal, now.**

We simply cannot wait. Last year, St. Louis had two “1 in 1000” year floods over the course of one week in July. We’re facing record breaking temperatures, supersized climate disasters, and trillions of dollars in disaster recovery costs. The need to transition to renewable energy should be indisputable. Because it is essential to protecting both our environment and our health.

We know that the most dire consequences of the climate crisis and environmental degradation fall hardest on Black and brown and low-income communities. In St. Louis we feel the brunt of the failure to transition to clean energy every day. Climate change has worsened racial disparities in mortality, respiratory disease, mental health, asthma rates, and heat-related illness.

We must also acknowledge the links between the extraction and sale of these minerals and violence. In March 2022, I attended a Congressional Delegation to Guatemala and Honduras and visited communities directly impacted by mining. I heard directly from them about the devastating effects of irresponsible extractive industries. For example, in Guatemala Xinka community members and leaders have faced retribution, intimidation, defamation, and even death for defending their land against the Escobal silver mine. Since 2011, the Xinka people have vocalized their concerns about the mine’s impact on water resources, cultural sites, and local self-determination. In 2013, the mining company’s security forces opened fire on peaceful Xinka protesters, injuring six people. We cannot continue to import critical minerals from places like Guatemala in order to make clean energy possible here at the expense of the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable groups elsewhere. That is not the type of sustainable future I am working toward.

To transition from polluting fossil fuels to clean energy technologies, we must make certain we have enough of the critical minerals and materials needed to get us there. But, existing control mechanisms have proven to be inefficient and too heavily rely on corporate goodwill. We must refuse to harm Central American, Indigenous, and many other communities around the world who live at or near sites of extraction and must update and enforce mining laws to ensure development benefits all people.

The global demand for minerals crucial to the development of clean energy technologies will increase at least 400-600% in the next 20 years. And the demand for cobalt and graphite—two critical materials found in electric vehicle batteries—could increase by nearly 4,000% by 2040. Our need to develop domestic supply of these materials will only increase in urgency as the demand continues to increase.

We will work with the Biden-Harris Administration to rapidly transition to a renewable energy economy. My colleagues and I are leading the way to pave a path for the Green New Deal. In the process, we will fortify the U.S. supply of critical minerals from corruption and unsafe conditions abroad that could disrupt our economy and put lives in danger. Responsibly strengthening domestic mining infrastructure must also ensure mining is performed in line with rigorous health and safety standards, creating cost-effective domestic production of critical materials.

We are beginning to make the kinds of public investments we need. Together with Congressional Democrats, President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act, which have provided a combined \$135 billion toward the electric vehicle sector—including critical minerals, and battery manufacturing.

Strengthening domestic production and resilient supply chains can improve economic security by growing the number of good paying union jobs and supporting the transition away from dangerous fossil fuels. The Environmental Defense Fund found that \$165.1 billion in investments in electric vehicles, their components, and batteries has led to the creation of 179,318 jobs in the last eight years.

We need far more investments to take on the climate crisis at scale. This is why I authored the Green New Deal for Cities Act. It will fund state, local, tribal, and territorial governments to do a broad array of climate and environmental justice projects, creating hundreds of thousands of union jobs in the process. Additionally, my bill includes a minimum of 50% investments in both frontline communities and climate mitigation.

These types of investments help move the United States away from its reliance on critical minerals developed in unsafe and unaccountable working conditions that endanger communities. We will generate hundreds of thousands of good-paying, union jobs in places like St. Louis and all around the country.

Thank you and I yield back.

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